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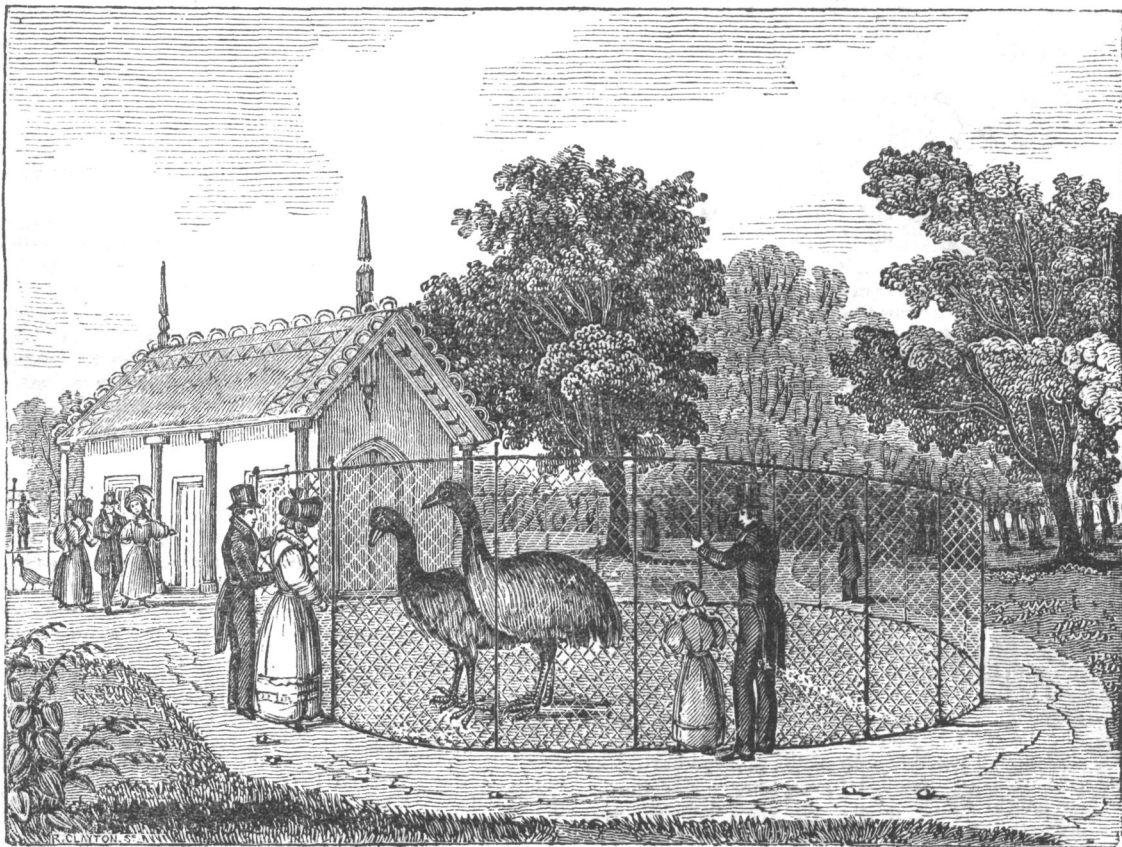
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with the Lancaster Sound, Regent's Inlet, &c., are now the great fishing stations, and all these regions have been discovered, or at least laid down with accuracy, by the recent navigators, who opened the route to the less adventurous traders—showed them that the seas abounded with whales—broke the icy barrier, which had never been passed since the days of Baffin, and described the coasts and harbours so correctly as to deprive the voyage of the greater part of its perils.

ANECDOTE OF A RAVEN.

In the days of Tiberius Cæsar, a young raven that had been hatched in a nest upon the temple of Castor and Pollux, took her first flight into a shoemaker's shop just opposite. The master of the booth was well pleased to receive the guest, especially as it had come from so sacred a place, and took great care of it. In a short time the winged visiter began to speak, and every morning flew to the top of the rostra, where, turning to the open forum,

he saluted the emperor, and after him Germanicus and Drusus, the young princes, each by his name, and after them the people that passed by. This he continued to do for many years, till another shoemaker, either envying his neighbour the possession of so rare a prize, or enraged at the bird for muting on his shoes, killed him. At this rash proceeding the people were so indignant, that they drove the ungenerous mechanic out of the street, and afterwards murdered him. The body of the raven was solemnly interred in a field two miles from the city, to which it was carried by two blacks, with musicians playing before, and a great crowd following. In such esteem, says Pliny, did the people of Rome hold this wit and aptness to learn in a bird, that they thought it a sufficient cause for ordering a sumptuous funeral, and even for putting a man to death, in that very city where many brave and noble persons have died without having their obsequies solemnized, and which afforded not one individual to revenge the undeserved death of the renowned Scipio Æmilianus, after he had conquered both Carthage and Numantia.



THE CASSOWARY.

The cassowary, though not so large as the emu, which is still less than the ostrich* in size and appearance, yet seems more bulky to the eye, its body being nearly equal, and its neck and legs much thicker and stronger in proportion; this conformation gives it an air of strength or force, which the fierceness and singularity of its countenance conspire to render formidable. It is five feet and a half long from the point of the bill to the extremity of the claws. The legs are two feet and a half high from the belly to the end of the claws. The head and neck together are a foot and a half; and the largest toe, including the claw, is five inches long. The claw alone of the least toe is three inches and a half in length. The wing is so small that it does not appear, it being hid under the feathers of the back. In other birds, a part of the feathers serve for flight, and are different from those that serve for mere covering; but in the cassowary all the

feathers are of the same kind, and outwardly of the same colour. The part, however, which most distinguishes this animal, is the head; which, though small like that of an ostrich, does not fail to inspire some degree of terror.

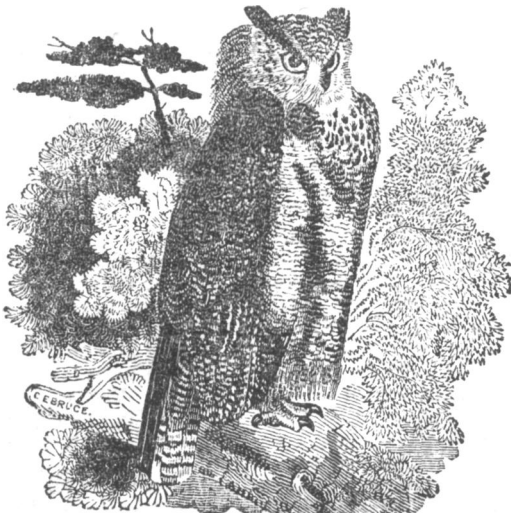
Appearing formed for a life of hostility, for terrifying others, and for its own defence, it might be expected that the cassowary was one of the most fierce and terrible animals of the creation. But nothing is so opposite to its natural character—nothing so different from the life it is contented to lead. It never attacks others; and instead of the bill, when attacked, it rather makes use of its legs, and kicks like a horse, or runs against its pursuer, beating him down, and treads him to the ground.

The manner of going of this animal is not less extraordinary than its appearance. Instead of going directly forward, it seems to kick up behind with one leg, and then making a bound onward with the other, it goes with such velocity, that the swiftest racer would be left far behind.

The cassowary is as remarkable for its voraciousness as

* See description in the 52d Number of our Journal.

the ostrich, swallowing every thing that comes within the capacity of its gullet. The Dutch assert that it can devour not only glass, iron, and stones, but even burning coals, without testifying the smallest fear, or feeling the least injury. It is said that the passage of the food through its gullet is performed so speedily, that even the very eggs which it has swallowed whole pass through it unbroken, in the same form they went down. In fact, the alimentary canal of this animal is extremely short; and it may happen that many kinds of food are indigestible in its stomach, as wheat or currants are to man when swallowed whole.



VIRGINIAN EAGLE OWL.

One of the most striking examples of the prevalence of vulgar prejudice over common sense and daily experience is afforded by the contemptuous antipathy in which the owls, the most useful to man of all the birds of prey, are almost universally held by those who derive the greatest advantage from their peculiar instincts. The singularity of their appearance, the loneliness of their habitations, the moping melancholy of their manners, their nocturnal habits, the still silence of their motions, and the grating harshness of their cries, combine to render them objects of dislike and terror to the timid and superstitious, who see in them something of an unearthly character, and regard them as birds of evil omen. But the commonest observation teaches us that they are in reality the best and most efficient protectors of our corn-fields and granaries from the devastating pillage of the swarms of mice and other small rodents, which but for them would increase to the most mischievous extent. By their wholesale destruction of these petty but dangerous enemies, the owls earn an unquestionable title to be regarded as among the most active of the friends of man; a title which only one or two among them occasionally forfeit by their aggressions on his defenceless poultry.

The peculiarities of their eyes and plumage evidently fit the owls in an especial degree for seeking their food by night, and on the surface of the ground. Dazzled by the splendour of the sun, the rays of which would penetrate too copiously through their immense pupils, they naturally withdraw during the day into dark and solitary places, where they sit perched, and almost motionless, waiting the approach of dusk. Their imperturbable gravity in this situation has somehow or other obtained for them the enviable privilege of being selected as the emblems of wisdom; but their assumed wisdom, like the cunning of the fox, depends more upon the defect of their visual faculties than on any superior intellectual capacity. If disturbed in their retreats, they are totally incapable of seeking safety in a prompt and open flight, but shuffle backwards and forwards from place to place in an embarrassed or uncertain manner, or remain fixed to one spot, ruffling their plumage, assuming a variety of grotesque attitudes, closing and re-opening the nictitating membranes of their eyes with ludicrous effect, and uttering a sharp hissing sound expressive of their uneasiness, or clattering

with their beaks. At such times the smaller birds, black-birds, thrushes, redbreasts, and jays, which seem to be aware of their incapacity to defend themselves, and feel an instinctive antipathy towards them, attack them on every side with impunity, and amuse themselves with heaping all kinds of insult upon their devoted heads. So strong is the incentive to these wanton outrages, that bird-catchers are in the habit of employing an owl to attract the lesser birds into their nets, and sometimes even find an imitation of its cry sufficient to produce the same effect.

But this impunity acts no longer than the full light of day. As soon as the sun has sunk beneath the horizon, the tormentors either quit the object of their attack, or fall victims to his renovated powers. Beneath the influence of the twilight, from which his large open pupil receives sufficient rays to guide him in his search, he sallies forth in quest of his prey, and aided by the capacious volume of his ears, and of the auditory cavities with which they communicate, seldom fails to detect the slightest rustling among the leaves of the trees, or beneath the herbage on the surface of the ground, while his own motions are so light and noiseless as to give no warning of his approach. In this manner the birds retiring to their nests, and the smaller quadrupeds seeking their subterranean burrows, fall easy victims to his attack. When their size admits of their being swallowed entire, he crushes them by a few efforts of his bill into a mass, which the amplitude of his throat enables him to pass at once into his stomach, and thus to lose as little as possible of the short time that is allowed him for procuring his food. Like most other predaceous birds, he afterwards ejects the bones, skins, and feathers or hair, formed into a ball. His powerful talons enable him to carry off his prey when disturbed, or, if it should be too large to be swallowed entire, to a place of safety.

The Virginian owl is spread over nearly the whole continent of America. "This noted and formidable bird," says Wilson, "is found in almost every quarter of the United States. His favourite residence, however, is in the dark solitudes of deep swamps, covered with a growth of gigantic timber; and here, as soon as evening draws on, and mankind retire to rest, he sends forth such sounds as seem scarcely to belong to this world, startling the solitary pilgrim as he slumbers by his forest fire, 'making night hideous.' Along the mountainous shores of the Ohio, and amidst the deep forests of Indiana, alone, and reposing in the woods, this ghostly watchman has frequently warned me of the approach of morning, and amused me with his singular exclamations, sometimes sweeping down and around my fire, uttering a loud and sullen *Waugh O! Waugh O!* sufficient to have alarmed a whole garrison. He has other nocturnal solos no less melodious, one of which very strikingly resembles the half-suppressed screams of a person suffocating or throttled, and cannot fail of being exceedingly entertaining to a lonely benighted traveller in the midst of an Indian wilderness."



THE HORNED OWL.

A description of this species of owl is given in our 105th No.